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ABSTRACT

The recruitment, screening, and appointment of faculty and staff are vital steps towards institutional excellence. The holistic approach to hiring reviews every aspect of each candidate's qualifications from various points of view. The approach begins with the formation of a screening/search committee consisting of a representative group of employees. In the hiring of an instructional dean, for example, the committee could consist of a peer dean, the dean of student affairs, two or three faculty members, two department chairs, an administrator working in close proximity to the dean, and a secretary. The committee plans the screening process and advertises the position, after which a group of candidates are generated who must submit a detailed resume and complete a comprehensive application form. From this list of candidates, the Delphi method is used to choose a group of semi-finalists. At this point, the committee develops a list of essay questions designed to obtain additional information which it considers important for the selection of finalists. After the 12 to 15 semi-finalists receive this request for additional information, many screen themselves out of the process. This unique step in the screening process produces a list of candidates who are themselves most serious about the position. Finalists are chosen from among those who respond, and after references are carefully checked, the finalists are each asked to attend a full-day on-campus interview session. Ultimately, committee members discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each finalist, rank the candidates, and either make a final decision or submit their rankings to a decisionmaker (vice-presdient or president). Appendixes to the document provide a sample letter with semi-finalist questions, a sample interview schedule, and a sample of on-campus screening interviews. (JMC)

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Personnel Selection: The Holistic Approach

by

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and

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JC 900 380

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PERSONNEL SELECTION: THE HOLISTIC APPROACH

By

John F. Cooper, Vice President for Instruction, Texas Southmost College
and
John F. Garmon, Dean of Instruction, Yavapai College

The most important decision in the entire management process is the selection of personnel. The recruitment, screening, and appointment of faculty and staff are vital steps in the journey toward institutional excellence. Your college is as strong as its people. They are the human resources who create and nurture a unique and successful college mission. The wrong hiring decision can have lasting implications for an organization, resulting in extra costs, lowered efficiency, and reduced quality of service to students. Considering these things, why then do colleges continue to treat hiring as an esoteric exercise which, somehow by magic, will always accurately identify, attract, and secure the best qualified personnel--in a very unscientific way? Why is there such a rush to complete one of the college's most important jobs? And why do we think that our innate "gut" reactions are more dependable than concrete data developed during the search and selection process?

As Peter Drucker, one of America's foremost authorities on management, points out, "The first managerial skill is the making of effective decisions." An effective hiring decision is one of the most valuable contributions to the success of the college. Drucker also points out, in his book Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, and Practices, "The first rule is to make sure that everyone who will have to do something to make the decision effective--or who could sabotage it--has been forced to participate responsibly in the discussion. This is not 'democracy.' It is salesmanship." Too often, hiring decisions are made too quickly by too few people. So barriers to the decision are erected.

2 - Hiring

To bring a new person in without first developing consensus is asking for trouble. We place an individual in an unwelcoming, if not hostile, environment.

The process for recruitment and selection of new faculty and administrators is important not only because it allows current employees to participate in the development of new personnel, but also because it gives everyone involved an opportunity for professional growth and soul-searching. By participating in the selection process, professional staff are able to learn more about the college; they are then better equipped to establish their own "global" view of the institution's structure and operation.

A modern procedure developed for obtaining the right person for the job is the holistic approach to hiring. This is a way to involve all of the important players in the selection process and create the best chance of finding the right person for the job. In this approach, each applicant is asked to complete a comprehensive college employment application form, submit a detailed resume, write extensive essay answers to questions developed by the search committee, participate in a day-long interview process, and assist the college by supplying professional references who are qualified to give accurate background information on the candidate's experience and education.

In the holistic approach every aspect of each candidate's qualifications is reviewed from various points of view. The search committee develops a list of essential qualifications, preferred qualifications, and peripheral qualifications--all of which help to make up a mosaic from which the candidate's total eligibility for employment will emerge.

Collectively the two writers of this article have served over forty years in teaching and administrative positions in fifteen states. We have been candidates for numerous positions and have been closely involved in the selection of hundreds of faculty, staff, and administrators. As a result of our experiences and inquiries of other colleges concerning their hiring practices, we suggest the following model, as it has worked as described. Note: Do not hurry the search process!

3 - Hiring

The Model for Hiring an Instructional Dean

A respected and trusted individual should be appointed to chair the screening/search committee. A representative group of employees should be selected to serve. An example would be the following: a peer dean, dean of student affairs, two or three faculty members, two department chairs, an administrator who will work closely with the new dean (i.e., dean of continuing education), and a secretary. The screening committee ought not to be too large (over twelve is large) or too small (fewer than five) for obvious reasons.

The first order of business for the committee is to plan the screening process. Be sure that everyone understands what is going to happen, when, and what the role of each committee member is going to be. This process is usually followed by most colleges; however, our model (and reference to "getting serious") begins at this point:

-- The advertisement for the position should be published in a national journal, such as The Chronicle of Higher Education, Community College Week, or The Community, Technical, and Junior College Times, for at least two issues.

-- The notice should specify the kind of credentials your college wants in a dean. Don't ask for reference letters at this point.

-- Devise an evaluation sheet for the screening committee to use as they read through the documents supplied by each applicant. Give each committee member the dean's job description.

-- Ask each committee member to select his or her top twelve to fifteen candidates and meet to list and discuss the evaluation sheets on those candidates. A method of choosing twelve to fifteen semi-finalists should be used to identify those whom you want to get serious about. We use a Delphi technique to rate the candidates most committee members have listed. This works well in reducing the number of names down to the list of semi-finalists.

The next step in the model is a feature seldom used, and it is unique

in finding out if the candidates themselves are serious about your college and the position which is open. It will provide the screening committee valuable and important information from which to select persons for on-campus interviews. The screening committee should develop a list of questions and information which it considers important for the selection of finalists. A sample letter with attached questions is provided at the end of this article as exhibit A. Please note that reference letters are requested at this point in the process.

Our experience has shown that when the twelve to fifteen semi-finalists receive this letter, with the request for extensive additional information, quite often a few candidates withdraw or never respond because they don't want to take the time to complete the required written portion of the essay-application process. This is an intentional self-screening-out part of our model.

The screening committee will take the additional information provided by each semi-finalist and use it to screen down to the finalists. We have found that this information, supplied by the candidates, and their references usually will tell the committee a great deal about each candidate. This information will be useful later, if the candidate is invited to come to the campus for an interview. Video-taped responses or interviews are not recommended. They are too impersonal, awkward, and artificial.

Again, a method of selecting the finalists must be decided. The additional information provided by each candidate will be extremely helpful in this process. This approach should make use of a modified Delphi technique. Once the finalists are chosen, spend some time doing reference checks--before you invite them for an interview. Always call the current and previous employers. Thorough reference checks will help you to get a comprehensive impression of each candidate, including the quality of work each person has done. The information gathered by the reference checks should be shared with the screening committee and, if negative information is discovered, this should be verified; if it proves to remain negative to the point of concern, this finalist may be replaced by moving another candidate up from the list of semi-finalists.

Preparing for the Finalists' Interviews: Before organizing the on-

campus interview, remember that the interview will go both ways. As you are interviewing the candidate, you and your college are also being interviewed. Quite often, colleges ask people to travel great distances and take valuable time from busy schedules for a one-to-two-hour interview. This is poor management and weak planning. If one really wants the best candidate, the day of the interview should be devoted to the entire process. The college should learn all it can about each finalist and make sure each person being interviewed has the opportunity to gain a comprehensive first look at the college and its people. In scheduling campus interviews, the full day is the best. A sample schedule is provided in exhibit B. Please note that this type of schedule welcomes the candidate, takes the mystery out of what will happen, and allows the candidate to orient herself or himself to the college and its setting. (Always provide some responsible person to pick up the candidate at the airport, unless the candidate is driving in or prefers to make other arrangements.)

The full-day schedule allows various individuals and groups on campus to play an active role in the interview process. It gives the candidate (and spouse if they come) an opportunity to be "in" your community, and check out firsthand such items as housing, schools, local economy, and other factors contributing to the local quality of life. It also shows the candidates that you are serious about them.

Prior to the candidate's visit, there are certain pre-interview actions you may wish to take. It is a good idea to send each candidate a packet of information about the college and the community. Tell the candidate about the college's policy regarding payment of interview expenses. When possible, all travel, meals, lodging, and other costs should be reimbursed by the college. Realistically, if the preceding process is followed, the college will have three to five very well qualified finalists, and you won't want to lose the best candidate by "saving" a few hundred dollars; instead, you'll be making an investment in the <u>best</u> choice.

<u>During the On-Campus Interview:</u> The committee should prepare a list of questions to ask each candidate and should plan how it will operate during the interview. It is always a good idea to help the finalist relax at the beginning by introducing the committee members and asking the

candidate to tell the committee a little about herself or himself. A sample of on-campus screening interviews is provided in exhibit C. The other persons who will interview candidates (vice president, president, etc.) should be given a folder of information about each finalist in sufficient time for review prior to the interview.

After the Interview: It is important for the committee to debrief within twenty four hours after each candidate is inteviewed. Group discussion should occur so than observations can be shared. Each committee member should keep written notes on the strengths, weaknesses, and other information on each candidate. Within a day or two (don't wait too long) after the last interview, the committee should meet to discuss all candidates. How this meeting is conducted is important. We recommend that the committee members come to the meeting with a list of strengths and weaknesses on each finalist. No rating should take place and no one should announce his or her favorites. After strengths, weaknesses, and other observations are individually verbalized, each committee member then should rank the candidates on a piece of paper. This listing of best, second best, and so on should be put on a chalkboard for all to see. Remember, this process is a tool, not the sole decider, in arriving at the best choices of personnel for your college. The final choice must "fit" your college, its people, and the community. That's why your people often are better selectors than outside consultants. This technique can be adapted to your individual college's method to select the top one or two choices.

Some college screening committees send the strengths and weaknesses of the finalists to the decision-maker (vice president or president) or the committee can prioritize the finalists and provide this information up the organizational structure.

If this holistic approach is followed, the most important decision a college can make will come closer to accuracy and good judgment. The result will be that the hiring decision is based on facts and collective wisdom, rather than hopefulness and guesswork. Although this model is described as hiring a dean, it can be easily adapted to any professional position at the college. Good luck as you use and adapt portions of this model and seriously hire competent, professional staff.

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Exhibit A

May 1, 1989

Dr----------

Dear Dr.-------,

The screening committee for the Dean of Occupational-Technical Education position at Texas Southmost College is in the process of screen down candidates to be invited in for interviews. You are among the semi-finalist candidates we wish to consider further at this time, and we request that you supply us with the information requested below.

*Provide copies of all **graduate** coursework and **graduate degrees** (unofficial copies of transcripts are sufficient at this time). Official copies will be requested of finalists.

*Have a <u>minimum</u> if three current letters of reference written by your immediate supervisors of your current and two (if applicable) most previous employers sent to me immediately. These letters should address your suitability and strengths in regards to the responsibilities expected of the Dean of Occupational-Technical Education at Texas Southmost College (a job description is attached for your use). Other current letters written by colleagues and non-supervisors, which are directed toward the position at TSC, are optional and welcome.

* Provide a typed response to the 9 questions enclosed.

* Complete <u>all</u> parts of the official TSC Application Form.

* Provide any other information which you feel will enhance your candidacy.

As you can surmise, we are interested in selecting the best qualified, dedicated, and talented Dean of Occupational-Technical Education possible. It is important that we <u>receive</u> the information requested above no later the **June 6, 1989.** The screening committee will review the information received and select approximately 3-5 candidates for an interview on campus. If you should have any questions about the process of selecting the Dean of Occupational-Technical Education, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

John F. Cooper, Ed.D.
Vice President for instruction

Exhibit A-2

TEXAS SOUTHMOST COLLEGE

Questions for Semi-Finalist Candidates for Dean of Occupational &Technical Education

Please limit answers to no more than one page each for questions 1-5:

1. Please describe the training and experiences that you have had which you feel to be the most significant in terms of filling the job requirements and leadership role for this position.

2. Describe your experience in budget development and subsequent management of the budget?

3. Provide brief statements of your educational philosophy to include the role of the community college in terms of the people we should be serving, how we should be serving them, what we should be doing for them, and why we should be serving them.

4. What do you consider to be the greatest problem facing occupational-technical community college educators and how can you help solve the problem as dean?

5. What are your long-range goals? What would you like for this position to do for your career?

6. Describe yourself as follows:

   a. What is your management style?
   b. What is your approach to supervision?
   c. How do you relate to faculty in general?
   d. What is your conflict-resolution style?
   e. How would others who have worked for and with you describe you?
   f. What experiences have you had in working with outside agencies such as State Coordinating Boards, State Licensing Agencies, Advisory Boards, etc?

7. Provide brief statements dealing with the following:

   a. Describe your concept of academic freedom and the relationship between the dean and faculty.
   b. How do you propose dealing with students in the Occupational-Technical Division who lack basic academic skills?
   c. How do you propose dealing with faculty and students in planning for and implementing outcomes assessments in courses?
   d. What do you consider to be the role of general education in occupational-technical areas?
   e. What do you consider to be the role of occupetional-technical education in a community college? Why?
   f. How do you propose to bring the business & industrial community into a close relationship with the Occupational-Technical Education Division?

8. Brief statements of your professional philosophy to include the following statements:

   a. The roles of administration, faculty, and students in college governance.
   b. The professional role and relationship of faculty and administration with regard to teaching procedures and methodology.
   c. The role of the Dean of Occupational & Technical Education with regard to the faculty in the classroom.
   d. The specific roles of faculty and administration in curriculum development.
   e. Your concept of reciprocal evaluation by administrators, other faculty, and students.
   f. The role of Continuing Education & its relationship to Occupational-Technical Education.

9. What are your views of working in a bicultural-bilingual setting?

Exhibit (B)

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR DR. GAIL McCLAIN

Dr. Gail McClain will interview for the Dean of Arts & Sciences position on Friday, June 24th. Dr. McClain is currently a Professor of Education and Human Development at Lincoln Memorial University (TN), and has served as a department chairperson and Dean of Arts & Sciences at LMU. The interview will include dinner at Antonio's Restaurant on Friday night, and we invite all faculty who are available.

SCHEDULE

Friday June 24th

9:00am - 10:00 am... Tour of Campus by Dorothy Gonzalez, Secretary to Dean of Arts & Sciences

10:00am - 10:30am... Interview with Vice President for Administrative Affairs

10:45am - 11:45am... Interview with Deans Screening Committee (Allied Health Building Conference Room)

11:45am - 1:00pm... Lunch with Academic Council and Screening Committee Members at the Ft. Brown Restaurant

1:15pm - 2:15pm... Interview with Academic Council and Screening Committee Members (Dean of Arts & Sciences Conference Room)

2:15pm - 3:15pm... Coffee & Group interaction with faculty in the **Allied Health Building Faculty Lounge**

3:15pm - 4:00pm... Interview with the President

Friday Evening June 2th

6:00 pm... Dinner at Antonio's Restaurant

This schedule is being sent to all department chairpersons in an effort to notify everyone quickly. Please post and make available to as many faculty as possible. All faculty are invited to Dinner with the candidate. All dinner guests are dutch treat and it would be appreciated if you can call my office to give me a straw count at your earliest convenience.

Thanks,

John F. Cooper

June 25, 1990

Exhibit B-1

Dr. Pete Buffufney, Candidate
Dean of Occupational-Technical Education
Texas Southmost College

Dear Dr. Buffufney:

Welcome to Brownsville and the Rio Grande Valley. I hope your trip was pleasant. I have enclosed a copy of your interview schedule for your use and information. Once you have settled in, please give me a call at my home: 567-1234, or Office: 567-4321.

On Monday morning I will pick you up at approximately 8:00 am and we will go to my office for an interview with me. You will be finished with the on-campus interview at approximately 4:30 - 5:00 pm and we will return you to your hotel. I will come to pick you up for dinner at approximately 6:20 pm in the hotel lobby. The dinner is meant to be informal and relaxing. A few faculty members and their spouses will attend.

Please keep copies of all of your personal travel/interview expenses. Once you have returned home, just send a copy (with receipts) of your expenses and we will reimburse you up to $000.00. We are looking forward to your visit with us and wish you well.

Sincerely,

John W. Barham, Ph.D.
Screening Committee Chairperson

Exhibit B

B-2

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR DR. PETE BUFFUFNEY

Dr. Pete Buffufney will interview for the **Dean of Occupational & Technical Education position** on Tuesday, June 13th. Dr. Buffufney is currently Assistant Dean of Technical Education at Western Peninsula Community College, and has served as a department chairperson and faculty member at community colleges in Virginia and Florida. He has also taught various The interview process will include a dinner at Silhouette's Restaurant on Tuesday night, and we invite all faculty who are available.

SCHEDULE

Tuesday, June 13th

9:00 am - 10:00 am...	Tour of Campus by John Wilkes, Director of Public Information
10:00 am - 10:45 am...	Interview with President
10:45 am - 11:30 am...	Interview with the Vice President for Administrative Affairs
11:45 am - 12:15 pm..	Coffee & Group interaction with faculty in the **Brennan Faculty Lounge**
12:45 pm - 1:45 pm...	Lunch with Occupational & TechnicalEducation Division Council and Screening Committee Members at the **Jennifer's Retreat Restaurant**
2:15 pm - 3:15pm...	Interview with Occupational & Technical Education Division Council Members **(Crittenden Conference Room)**
3:30 pm - 4:30 pm...	Interview with Deans Screening Committee **(Crittenden Conference Room)**
6:30 pm	Dinner at **Cara's Restaurant**

This schedule is being sent to all department chairpersons in an effort to notify everyone quickly. Please post and make available to as many faculty as possible. All faculty are invited to Dinner with the candidate. All dinner guests are dutch treat.

Thanks,

John W. Barham, Chairperson
Dean's Screening Committee

Exhibit C

TEXAS SOUTHMOST COLLEGE

Questions for Candidates for Dean of Occupational-Technical Education Position

Please limit answers to no more than one page each for questions 1-5:

1. Please describe the training and experiences that you have had which you feel to be the most significant in terms of filling the job requirements and leadership role for this position.

2. Describe your experience in budget development and subsequent management of the budget?

3. Provide brief statements of your educational philosophy to include the role of the community college in terms of the people we should be serving, how we should be serving them, what we should be doing for them, and why we should be serving them.

4. What do you consider to be the greatest problem facing occupational-technical community college educators and how can you help solve the problem as dean?

5. What are your long-range goals? What would you like for this position to do for your career?

6. Describe yourself as follows:
   a. What is your management style?
   b. What is your approach to supervision?
   c. How do you relate to faculty in general?
   d. What is your conflict-resolution style?
   e. How would others who have worked for and with you describe you?
   f. What experiences have you had in working with outside agencies such as State Coordinating Boards, State Licensing Agencies, Advisory Boards, etc?

7. Provide brief statements dealing with the following:
   a. Describe your concept of academic freedom and the relationship between the dean and the faculty.
   b. How do you propose dealing with students in the Occupational-Technical Division who lack basic Academic Skills?
   c. How do you propose dealing with faculty and students in planning for and implementing outcomes assessments in courses?
   d. What do you consider to be the role of general education in occupational-technical areas?
   e. What do you consider to be the role of occupational-technical education in a community college? Why?
   f. How do you propose to bring the business & industrial community into a close relationship with the occupational-technical division?

8. Brief statements of your professional philosophy to include the following statements:

a. The role of administration, faculty and students in college governance.

b. The professional role and relationship of faculty and administration with regard to teaching procedures and methodology.

c. The role of the dean of Occupational-Technical Education with regard to the faculty in the classroom.

d. The specific roles of faculty and administration in curriculum development.

e. Your concept of reciprocal evaluation by administrators, other faculty and students.

f. The role of Continuing Education & its relationship to Occupational-Technical Education.

9. What are your views of working in a bilingual setting?

Exhibit C-1

Sample questions to be used to ask the final group of candidates when they interview on campus:

1. What do you consider to be your most positive strengths or characteristics? What do you need to improve on the most?

2. What are your long range goals? What would you like for this position to do for your career in the next five years?

3. What positive changes or improvements in the area of instructional administrative services have you accomplished in your last or present job?

4. How would you describe yourself as a professional?

5. How would others who have worked for and with you describe you?

6. Why do you think you are the candidate we should choose?

7. What do you think are the most necessary qualifications to effectively discharge the responsibilities of this position?

8. How do you view the budget making process? What role will you play? Others?

9. What is the role of the Dean of Occupational-Technical Education in recruitment efforts of the college?

10. What is your management style? Your approach to supervision? How do you relate to the faculty in general?

11. What is the most important function of TSC?

12. Do you have any expertise to lend to fund raising efforts here at TSC?

13. What is your philosophy of the role of student services in the education process?

14. As we are faced with tighter budgets, increasing enrollments, fewer dollars and fewer resources, how can we accomplish our mission?

15. What do you feel is the important challenge in the field of academic administration especially in the faculty development area?

16. Where would your priorities be in tight budgeting of money?

17. What impresses you most about TSC?

18. What questions would you like to ask?